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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews selected literature on education/business partnerships (EBPs), highlighting the status of partnership evaluations and current methodologies. Research by S. Otterbourg and D. Adams (1989), which surveyed about 24 EBPs to ascertain planning, implementation, and evaluation priorities, showed that only 25% of the programs used outcomes data to measure effectiveness. Otterbourg and Adams concluded that: the current state of the art of partnership program evaluation is at an elementary level; leaders are just beginning to use evaluation to collect data needed for making informed program-related decisions; and there is a lack of precedent and experience and an absence of appropriate systems and instruments for evaluating partnership programs. Methods used to evaluate several EBPs are reviewed, including: documentation of collaboration and long-range planning processes of the METROLINK program by the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL); qualitative review by Public/Private Ventures of nine school/business partnerships through site visits, observations, interviews, and document review of program materials; site visits, observations, interviews, debriefings with and written reports by technical assistants, questionnaire administration, phone follow-ups, and document review of the Ford Foundation's Urban School/Community Dropout Prevention Collaboratives from 1986 to 1990; a Rand Corporation study of school/community collaborations via case studies, semi-structured interviews, and document searches; case studies and "mini" case reviews of EBPs; document review, phone interviews, and site visits of 16 urban colleges by the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges in 1981-84; interviews and impact evaluations conducted by the Career Beginnings program; questionnaire administration, phone interviews, and site visits by the IEL to evaluate 70001's Work, Achievement, and Values in Education Program in 1990; and day visits, interviews, and observations used in a study of local science education alliances in 1988. The review illustrates the need for more systematic evaluation of EBP programs; and the need for additional inquiry, elaboration, and refinement of evaluation models. (RLC)

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AN OVERVIEW OF EVALUATION RESEARCH ON SELECTED EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Prepared for the Educational Partnerships Study Group
by Education Resources Group, Inc.

January, 1991

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Preface

The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) funded the first cycle of four year projects under its new Educational Partnerships Program in September 1990. The Educational Partnerships Program is authorized by the Educational Partnerships Act of 1988, Title VI, subtitle A, Chapter 5 of the Omnibus Trade and Competitiveness Act of 1988 (Pub. L.100-418) (20 U.S.C. 5031-5039). This legislation also requires the Secretary to conduct an annual evaluation of the grants made under the program and to disseminate information relating to the activities assisted.

In performing the evaluation and dissemination responsibility, OERI has attempted to design its activities to build on what already is known, and to expand knowledge about the characteristics of effective partnerships and how to establish, sustain, and evaluate them. In order to establish a baseline for future work, assess what already is known about educational partnerships, and review potential evaluation design options, OERI commissioned the following analyses and syntheses:

Danzberger, Jacqueline P., "EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAM: ANALYSIS OF PROJECT CHARACTERISTICS," December, 1990.

Education Resources Group, "AN OVERVIEW OF EVALUATION RESEARCH ON SELECTED EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS," January, 1991.

Education Resources Group, Inc. "OPTIONS FOR EVALUATING THE EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAM," January, 1991.

Grobe, Terry and Susan P. Curnan and Alan Melchior, "SYNTHESIS OF EXISTING KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS," December, 1990.

This is one of the four commissioned reports. All four are available through ERIC.

STATUS OF PARTNERSHIP EVALUATIONS

A review of selected literature on educational partnerships reveals 1) the need for more systematic evaluation of such programs and 2) approaches or methodologies being used to evaluate them. The following types of assertions have recently been made.

> The research literature on school/business interactions is now huge; descriptive histories abound, coupled with informative "how-to" books illustrating specific practices and policies that support success... Most school and business participants have focused their attention on process, rather than product. While this focus is critical at the beginning, the development of relevant outcome measures is key to continuation and replication. Clearly, improving and expanding these interactions through rigorous evaluation procedures is the next step.
>
> - Roberta Trachtman, in, Partnerships in Education: Measuring Their Success, 1989

> Few short-term partnership efforts have been rigorously evaluated. While thoughtful analyses of issues are evident in selected research studies, these analyses confirm that qualitative information about metropolitan collaboration is scarce. Most information about public-private partnerships consists of quantitative data and anecdotal descriptions.
>
> - Institute for Educational Leadership, 1986

> My major concern...is that we have no means by which we can assess whether or not such collaboratives and activities...really have any impact upon the goals. [We need] a reporting mechanism annually or biannually as to whether or not the strategies are making any difference.
>
> - John W. Porter, General Superintendent of Schools in Detroit, 1990

> The bottom line questions among results-oriented people is, what difference have school-business partnerships made? The authors have assembled some evidence and put forward their own answers... Beyond that, [they] argue for more attention to outcomes and they sketch the evaluation tasks that will be helpful in that.
>
> - Dale Mann, in Partnerships in Education: Measuring Their Success, 1989

Susan Otterbourg and Don Adams, the authors referred to by Mann, surveyed some two dozen school-business partnerships around the country to ascertain planning, implementation, and evaluation priorities (1989). Only a quarter of the programs reported using outcomes data to measure effectiveness; they were keeping student records of courses passed, grades, results of achievement and content-based tests, attendance or dropout/ retention rates, and in one case, job performance ratings. About 20% were planning for outcomes evaluation in the future: these and the remaining 55% were primarily using questionnaires and surveys to elicit feedback from participants.

A review of program information included in their report indicates some sophisticated recordkeeping, process documentation, and understanding of which student outcomes might be measured (e.g., attendance and incidence of substance abuse). Despite this, Otterbourg and Adams concluded that "the current 'state of the art' of partnership program evaluation is at an elementary level...Leaders are just beginning to use evaluation

to collect data necessary to make informed programmatic decisions." Although programs reported that recordkeeping was relatively easy and straightforward, demonstrating outcomes was very difficult. The authors believe that there is a "lack of precedent and experience" and an "absence of appropriate systems and instruments" for evaluating partnership programs. More vigorous partnership evaluations of both processes and outcomes must be designed and funded. A detailed, step-by-step guide for partnerships wishing to develop their own monitoring and record keeping systems has been developed by Otterbourg (1990).

CURRENT METHODOLOGIES

Summaries of methods used to evaluate a number of school-business, school-community, and school-university partnerships are provided here. They reinforce, in general, that outcomes evaluations have not been conducted on many of these partnerships. Also, projects selected for this paper represent only a small sample of the studies being conducted on educational partnerships. A list of additional partnerships with evaluations, about which the reader might want to obtain information, is included in the Appendix.

The Institute for Educational Leadership's (IEL) conclusion about a lack of "rigorous" evaluation led staff to develop and

document the METROLINK program in 1984 and 1985. Eight cities participated in this demonstration of communitywide collaborations to develop human resources through education, employment, and training. IEL documented the processes of collaboration and long-range planning through program documents, interim project reports from the eight sites, correspondence, meeting minutes, and press coverage. They also gathered data from the site coordinators' exchange of information at quarterly group meetings and their interviews with local collaborative leaders. IEL's report on METROLINK, prepared for the Danforth Foundation which funded the program, outlines five "stages" of collaborative development and twelve "themes" which apparently characterize collaborative efforts.

In a major assessment of nine school/business partnerships, Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) attempted to 1) determine their significance for at-risk youth, 2) delineate their "concrete effects" on these students, and 3) predict their potential to improve public education (P/PV, 1987). Their study was qualitative: they conducted site visits, observations, interviews, and document review of program materials. Descriptive and quantitative information were collected when available. They analyzed student outcomes data for two of the nine projects.

Results of these assessments are included in a two-volume

set which analyzes school/business partnership components represented by the nine programs and presents "extensive profiles" of them. P/PV concluded that partnerships "enabled schools to better serve at-risk youth" by providing increased access to employment/work experience, job coaching and preparation, and increased personal attention.

A more recent, multi-year documentation of the Ford Foundation's Urban School-Community Dropout Prevention Collaboratives (1986-1990) studied the processes of collaboration, planning, technical assistance, generating public awareness, and local information gathering and evaluation efforts. A variety of methods were used to study these, including site visits, observations, interviews, debriefings with and written reports by technical assistants, a questionnaire, phone follow-ups, and document review (Clark, 1988_a). Documenters used a set of structured reporting forms so that data could be collected in a standardized way across sites and the key processes of interest were studied at each data collection point.

Through systematic content analysis of these reports and related program documents, Education Resources Group (ERG), which is coordinating the collaboratives documentation, has generated a number of findings about collaboration between schools and communities. For example, ERG told OERI's Urban Superintendents Network about the need for "visible, facilitating leadership from

the superintendent," and the various ways this has been manifested in the better functioning dropout collaboratives (Clark, 1988_b). A full analysis of findings from this documentation will be presented in a manuscript being prepared with funds from The Ford Foundation and The Carnegie Corporation.

Another broad study of school system-community collaborations, this one by the RAND Corporation, focused on improving school systems and the "specific actors" who played critical roles in that improvement (Hill, et al, 1989). Rand selected six urban school systems and did case studies of the processes that affected school system improvement. Although their focus was on the educational systems, they saw the role of business and community leaders as essential to improvement. During 1987-88, RAND field teams did a series of semi-structured interviews and document searches during two to four visits per city. The interviews -- dozens in each site including those with business, civic, and government leaders -- provided the basis for their case studies.

Seven "case studies" and 22 "mini" cases of business-school partnerships -- including the Boston Compact and the California Roundtable -- are included in the 1988 Committee for Economic Development publication American Business and the Public Schools (Levine and Trachtman). Authors of the case studies (many of whom were involved in implementation of the partnership) offered

mixed assessments of program impact (i.e., pointed out successes but also cited problems in outcomes data) and raised a number of questions and caveats about outcomes of those partnerships.

Researchers for the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges reported on a 1981-84 project in which 16 urban colleges committed financial or other resources toward improving opportunities for urban youth through partnerships with public schools (Mocker, et al, 1988). The authors also studied the collaborative process, by seeking common factors that appeared to contribute to the success of the most "productive" projects. They used document review, phone interviews, and site visits. It is not clear how they defined productive collaboration, but they report six "lessons" that emerged from their study, which indicate the conditions under which productive collaborations operate.

Another college-school partnership program, which also uses business resources, is the CAREER BEGINNINGS program (Bloomfield, 1989). Its purpose is to increase the likelihood that minority and disadvantaged high school graduates enter college or get good jobs. Administered out of Brandeis University since 1985, the program started with 24 two and four-year colleges around the country. The program is cited in this review because several evaluative studies have been conducted on it. These and the outcomes they focus on are described below.

Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC) conducted first-year interviews of CAREER BEGINNINGS participants, and wrote a preliminary "impact" evaluation focusing on such student outcomes as high school graduation rates and college attendance and retention rates. They did a "final" report after the second program year (1987), which included data on a control group. An unpublished Louis Harris and Associates survey on mentoring was conducted in 1989 with Commonwealth Fund support. A Boston-based group, Education Matters, conducted an implementation analysis funded by The MacArthur Foundation: that report, which will be out soon, focuses on administration, staffing, program activities, and level of partnership activities. Site program administrators are keeping data tracking students through high school and college; although there are no comparison group data, site statistics are being contrasted with the U.S. Department of Education's data on college-going rates for these types of students. (Information about evaluation of CAREER BEGINNINGS was provided by William Bloomfield via telephone on 11/9/90).

The Institute for Educational Leadership used different data collection methods than they had for METROLINK to evaluate 70001's Work, Achievement, and Values in Education (WAVE) program in 1990. In its first implementation year at the time, WAVE was attempting to develop community - high school linkages to improve at-risk students' prospects for academic and personal success. After distributing questionnaires and conducting phone interviews

with WAVE teachers, site administrators, and 70001 program specialists, IEL staff visited 13 of 52 WAVE sites and administered in-person, structured interviews with students, teachers, administrators, staff, parents, and community members involved in WAVE and non-WAVE teachers. IEL concluded in its final report (1990) that WAVE was having positive effects on students and teachers, but pointed out that "long-term results will need to be examined" and "continual academic progress needs longer term validation" through test scores and other outcomes data.

A study of local science education alliances evolved from an evaluation of 20 collaboratives funded by The Carnegie Corporation to a "careful look" at new, inter-institutional approaches to the improvement of science education around the country. Researchers Myron and Ann Atkin conducted two to three day visits in 1988 to 30 partnerships "with strong reputations for quality of inter-institutional cooperation." They collected qualitative information through interviews and observations. Their findings are discussed in a book which also includes rich descriptions of a variety of science education alliances and their sources of support (Atkin and Atkin, 1989).

DEVELOPING MODELS

Shirley Hord of the University of Texas synthesized the

theoretical literature which attempts to distinguish between "collaboration" and "cooperation" among partners (1986). In that context she discussed several studies which focused on "successful" collaborations, but did not explain how these conclusions were derived. Her final statement continues to be illustrative of the state-of-art of evaluating partnerships.

> A great deal of additional inquiry, elaboration, and refinement is necessary. Research is needed that undertakes comparative studies of the various ways of interrelating: cooperation, coordination, collaboration, and so on. With a further delineation of the components of each process, including an explication of the costs and benefits of each, perhaps we would learn the requirements of each method, the limitations, and the effectiveness of each type under specific circumstances.

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Appendix

Other Selected Partnerships with Evaluation Studies*

College Bound, GE Foundation, Fairfield, CT.

Education for the Future Project, c/o Managing Excellence in Education, Irvine, CA.

Educational EQuality Project, The College Board, New York City.

Generations Together, The University of Pittsburgh, PA.

New Futures Initiative, Annie E. Casey Foundation, Greenwich, CT.

Panasonic Foundation School Improvement Program, Secaucus, NJ.

Syracuse University Project Advance, Syracuse, NY.

Urban Mathematics Collaboratives, c/o Education Development Center, Newton, MA.

* Also see Otterbourg and Adams, Partnerships in Education, for references to two dozen partnerships.

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